

## Circulations

Antonia Hirsch

Desire (v.) early 13c., from Old French *desirrer* (12c.) “wish, desire, long for,” from Latin *desiderare* “to long for, to wish for; demand, expect,” [...]from the phrase *de sidere* “from the stars.”<sup>1</sup>

### Exchange and Circulation

Earth’s most important star, the sun, divides our existence into night and day, unconscious and conscious. It assumed what we today consider its rightful place less than 500 years ago.

Nicolaus Copernicus gave his name to the eponymous revolution that produced the paradigm shift marking the departure from a concept of the universe as geocentric and toward a heliocentric model.<sup>2</sup> It is a lesser-known fact that the author of the Copernican Revolution also wrote on economics. *On the Minting of Coin* was published, in various iterations, between 1517 and 1526,<sup>3</sup> and so it is Copernicus who is also credited with inventing the quantity theory of money, which focuses on money supply in a given economy—in other words, on problems such as excessive proliferation, also known as inflation. On first sight, Copernicus’s dual expertise may seem somewhat surprising. Yet the obvious connection between his two areas of interest is circulation: planetary and monetary.

Copernicus’s famous astronomical discovery was closely preceded by another revolution, the invention of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century, signaling a new era in the proliferation and distribution of information.<sup>4</sup> One might assume that the work of medieval astronomers contributed, metaphorically, to the broadening of worldviews in a way comparable to that of early mechanically assisted publishing. (For example, the circulation of the printed theses of Martin Luther, a contemporary of Copernicus.) However, although medieval astronomical inquiries were considered useful for the precise calculation of (religious) calendars and were utilized in astrological predictions regarding the fortunes of kings and empires, astronomical endeavors such as Copernicus’s—literally broadening knowledge horizons—had to answer to a restrictive “information management” by the Church and other, secular, powers.

Both of these “circulatory systems,” astronomical and monetary, evoke specific *arenas* pertaining to knowledge and economy in which an individual has the potential to attain some level of agency. And while the mere existence of discourse (information in circulation) does not eliminate, for example, illiteracy, and the existence of a viable monetary system does not in

---

<sup>1</sup> Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. “Desire,”

[http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=desire&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=desire&allowed_in_frame=0).

<sup>2</sup> Copernicus is thought to have begun working on his seminal book *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (*On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*) around 1510. The book was not published until 1543 in Nuremberg. See Dava Sobel, *A More Perfect Heaven: How Copernicus Revolutionized the Cosmos* (New York: Walker & Company, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Nicolaus Copernicus was educated in canon law and medicine. He commenced tenure as economic administrator of Warmia, in what today is Poland, in 1516, and in this capacity he wrote and later published *Monetae cudendae ratio* (*On the Minting of Coin*).

<sup>4</sup> By the time Copernicus was born, there were approximately 110 printing presses operating across Europe.

itself bestow financial power on an individual, it nevertheless sets out a stage that awaits its actors.<sup>5</sup>

The notion of circulation expands the idea of exchange from a simple give-and-take economy—a one-to-one exchange—to a more complex configuration in which “what goes round comes around,” but perhaps not from the same direction and not necessarily from or to a single point, but multiple nodes.<sup>6</sup>

The expression “what goes around comes around” articulates equivalencies—viz., representation. Fundamentally, representation registers what can stand in for something else (what is of equal value), so that it is possible to state that a commodity costs a certain amount of money—a universal exchange equivalent and floating signifier—and so conversely, the commodity can also become representative of a certain amount of labor. It is through this floating signifier (money) that circulation is possible. This is different from a barter economy where in every single act of exchange anew, a parity in value has to be established and specific items are exchanged against each other. For example, two individuals may agree that a specific laptop and a particular bicycle possess equal value, which results in a trade, but should the bicycle subsequently be traded against another object, an entirely new negotiation—rather than the mere naming of a price—would have to ensue regarding the value parity of the respective items to be traded.

By extension of this logic of representation, an image of a thing can stand in for the idea of that thing. A color can stand in for a political party and thereby describe who can stand in, or who can stand up for what or for whom, and it becomes possible for these ideas or values—as representations—to circulate broadly.<sup>7</sup> Ideas, while specific to some degree, retain the quality of a floating signifier insofar as they can be represented materially, but, by definition, they remain in the immaterial realm of thought. Representation necessarily relies on abstraction, and the particular nature of that abstraction is determined by the context in which it is produced. Therefore representation of any kind is itself the result of an exchange: a negotiation, a bargaining.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> See Patricia Reed’s discussion of the “wrong in common” in her essay “Economies of Common Infinitude,” in *Intangible Economies*, ed. Antonia Hirsch (Vancouver: Fillip, 2012), 197.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Derrida’s *Dissemination* seems relevant in this context, but I admit that I have not engaged with it enough to properly fold it into my discussion here. However, it might be useful to consider the particular difference of terms: circulation indicates something that returns but in possibly circuitous, meandering, and maybe even devious ways; dissemination describes a kind of spreading of seed, sending something on its way, without expectation of return, or rather, where any return is a fortuitous gift, unaccounted for, so to speak. This outward movement of dissemination, a giving away without expectation of return, could therefore be deemed “uneconomic”—also in the sense that it escapes the Symbolic order. See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (London: Continuum, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> As I have set out elsewhere, I propose to consider “economy” more broadly as a form of exchange that is not limited, as is common in popular discourse, to transactions of capital, commodities, and labor that can be expressed in a fiscal dimension. See Antonia Hirsch, “Intangible Economies,” in *Intangible Economies*.

<sup>8</sup> Forms of exchange, therefore, as divergent positions confronting one another, compel questions of ethics. By this I am not only pointing to the categorical imperative implied by “what goes around comes around,” but also to the ethical values that are negotiated alongside common economic transactions. For example, the purchase of goods to satisfy a basic need is never abstract or reduced just to the satisfaction of such a need, but in a capitalist economy, in the choices made around the mode of transaction and as to the particular commodity elected for the satisfaction

Considered in the context of the circulation of ideas, Copernicus's quantity theory, which addresses monetary circulation specifically, also brings to mind the complication and challenge that the proliferation of voices, inflationary amounts of information, and, by extension, any form of publication—from those generated before and by the first printing presses to those distributed electronically—has posed to epistemological systems. This kind of inflationary proliferation of information has created a situation in which it has become glaringly obvious that what permits us to navigate our lives in more or less sane ways is not principally the existence or accessibility of information, but how we are able to negotiate a convoluted system of “knowables” that are quasi-value-free until they are integrated into an ordered system (the Internet as a form of logorrhea). This active navigation of information, a kind of empirical process that tests a “knowable” as to its feasibility, making it, or dismissing it as, a “viable,” constructs an epistemological system, something that by determining viability assigns value.<sup>9</sup>

The formation of an epistemological system is driven by curiosity—a desire for information, ideas, and knowledge. Desire—whether intellectual, erotic, or of a less savory variant (desire for power, for example)—is both the force that moves things, that makes the world go round, and it is the force that *builds* worlds through the centrifugal force emanating from a point of perception, a point momentarily condensing to form a center of gravity: a self. This desire must not be virtuous at all. It is value-free as a force that merely commands movement and, action.

### **Representative Money—Representation of Ideas**

Copernicus's *On the Minting of Coin* concerns itself fundamentally with the problem of a currency's face value being incommensurate with its exchange value. By diagnosing this problem of differing values, Copernicus did not only anticipate Adam Smith's identification of money as a commodity, but, in the very problem he apprehended, the astronomer also confronted the conceptual foundation on which fiat money<sup>10</sup> would later come to be based.<sup>11</sup> Representative money deploys a similar divergence in value strategically, as in, for example, paper money beginning to circulate in Europe in the seventeenth century, where face value and

---

of a particular need, an ethical value system is expressed that reaches far beyond the purchase of, say, a bottle of juice (organic or conventional? Regional or mass-produced? Brand-name or generic?).

<sup>9</sup> The mere mention of a “knowable” must conjure the memorable 2002 press conference held by Donald Rumsfeld, then US Secretary of Defense, in which he stated with regard to the possible existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq: “There are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns.” Rumsfeld was much lambasted for this philosophical excursus, yet not only was he correct in the point he made, but the context of the Iraq War also makes it painfully clear how the knowing of certain facts goes hand in hand with their ordering into a system that assigns value (e.g., the Axis of Evil), and that then compels actions that are justified under that value system. For the full text of the press conference see Donald Rumsfeld, “Secretary Rumsfeld Press Conference at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium,” June 6, 2002, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3490>.

<sup>10</sup> Fiat money assumes its value not based on its material value, but by *fiat* of an issuing authority.

<sup>11</sup> Copernicus recognized these two crucial aspects in the phenomenon of money; they are embedded in his assertion that all kinds of money have a value (*valor*) and an estimated value (*estimatio*). He asserts that “while the value of a given coin depends on the amount and quality of the metal bullion of which it is made, its *estimatio* is its nominal value set by the overall authority in the country.” Leszek Zygnier, “Treatise *On the Minting of Coin* and Copernicus Views on Economics,” Nicolaus Copernicus Thorunensis, <http://copernicus.torun.pl/en/science/economics/4/>.

material value obviously no longer stood in any relation to each other as would have still been the case with, for instance, silver coins.<sup>12</sup>

Copernicus pointed out the need for restraint with regard to the minting of money. He argued in support of a single controlling power to oversee the issuing of currency against the background of a church apparatus that claimed exactly such a monopoly on the dispersal of information and learning. Without the church losing, at least to some degree, its stranglehold on the circulation of knowledge, Copernicus's theory would never have come to light, and, importantly, would not have been improved upon in the wake of its publication.<sup>13</sup> However, it was also the Catholic Church that, contemporaneously with Copernicus's research on astronomy, partially financed itself through a prototype of representative money: the so-called letters of indulgence that granted absolution from sin in exchange for a fee. Ironically, printing presses were used during that period to undermine the Church's knowledge monopoly, but they simultaneously also permitted an accelerated trade in the letters of indulgence (as their production, too, could now be expedited), initially fortifying the Church's economic power.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, however, the emergence of modern money, the explosive proliferation of thought—unsanctioned thought, that is, thought by authors rather than authorities<sup>15</sup>—and the secularization of power went hand in hand.

I propose parallels between a monetary economy and an economy of ideas by emphasizing money's character as a universal exchange equivalent that can actualize itself (its value) in

---

<sup>12</sup> This value differential posed a difficult problem because, and this was Copernicus's core thesis, "bad money" drives out good, with "bad money" flooding the market. This thesis later became known as Gresham's law after Sir Thomas Gresham (1519–79), an English financier. Copernicus diagnosed that the value of a coin could, in circulation, end up being worth less than its face value either through an excessive dispersal of coins relative to the values being created in a given economy, or because the alloy (copper + silver or copper + gold) used to mint the coins was poorer than the pure precious metal it pretended to represent (as per its face value)—with the result that "good money" (undervalued by its face value) would be hoarded, thereby pulled out of circulation, whereas "bad money" (overvalued by its face value) would flood the market. In today's economies, value differentials play out in free currency exchange, that is, normally across the lines that divide national economies—and currencies. During Copernicus's time and in his home region of what is now Poland, there were Prussian and Polish coins in circulation simultaneously, so that the problem of competing currencies was only compounded by the issue of a degradation of the material values of coins through the minting process.

<sup>13</sup> By the likes of Johannes Kepler, for example. Nevertheless, one of the reasons why Copernicus hesitated to publish *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* for almost four decades was, in part, due to his acknowledgment that his theory opposed church doctrine and contravened the then-current interpretation of scripture that announced that the earth stood still and the sun moved. See Sobel, *A More Perfect Heaven*.

<sup>14</sup> Of course, the mere printing of texts did not immediately eliminate the illiteracy prevalent outside the clergy. As Jan Verwoert points out in his essay "Faith Money Love," it was the same printing presses that helped the proliferation of the letters of indulgence as well as Martin Luther's condemnation of exactly such practices in the Catholic Church of the time. I thank Jan Verwoert for drawing my attention to the fact that in the fifteenth century, the newly invented printing presses tied Luther and the Catholic Church into this strange technological union. See Jan Verwoert, "Faith Money Love," in *Intangible Economies*.

<sup>15</sup> Here it might be useful to reflect briefly on the seemingly related terms of "author" and "authority." Etymologically, "author" stands for "originator, creator, instigator." "Authority," on the other hand, stands for that which "settles the argument." Both terms describe, in other words, almost diametrically opposed concepts relevant to the positioning of today's authors (artists) as the much-hailed public intellectuals, participating in a public discourse. As Hannah Arendt points out, authority is a form of power, yet it excludes the notion of violence, because where violence is required to enforce authority, the latter has already failed. Thus the concept of authority is incommensurable with conditions of equality, a condition required for argumentation and persuasion to take hold. See Hannah Arendt, "Was ist Autorität?," in *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft: Übungen im politischen Denken I*, ed. Ursula Ludz (Munich: Piper, 1994).

varying forms in the material world (as, for example, commodities). Similarly, ideas are able to circulate independently from their materialization, and, in a material economy, it is exchange that gives ideas their currency and also what gives them value.<sup>16</sup> It is the sharing and transacting of either (money or ideas) that creates realities.

Conversely, we might consider money as information; this “information” is not only expressed through exchange value—and here it is possible to find a more obvious and striking convergence with the notion of information in circulation—but in the form of paper money itself. At the time of the hyperinflation in 1920s Weimar Germany, emergency money was issued by municipalities or companies, somewhat haphazardly, as promissory notes in order to facilitate continued economic activity that had threatened to come to a halt due to galloping inflation. As banknotes became worth less and less, official institutions normally charged with printing the national currency could not keep up with the numbers of bills required to pay for even small purchases such as bread, which suddenly cost thousands of marks, and thereby required incredible amounts of bills in circulation. However, since this emergency money was not issued by the regular authorities who would adorn their bills with insignia of the national state and emblems of national pride, the peculiar emergency money instead proffered poetry, contemporary artwork, and statistics as to the current economic situation, as well as unsanctioned political commentary. These semi-legitimate currencies resembled handbills or news bulletins normally considered an order of printed material wholly different from that of money—even though circulation is crucial for both.

To this day, representative money, the stuff that emerged in close simultaneity to the printed book, has essentially remained a promissory note that functions only by virtue of faith in its issuer. In the context of the proliferation of thought, with an increasing number of voices becoming available, the question of issuers—authors—and their reliability and substance, is similarly significant. Ultimately, all technological improvements and personal efficiency strategies notwithstanding, there is a limit to how much humans, as living entities with finite biological capacities, can process; how much information, services, and goods they can transact. Consequently, in a universe of exponentially growing multiplicities of voices and “knowables,” there seems to be a more urgent need for a baseline, a path, or stable epistemological system.

By pointing to the problem of inflation, an inflationary explosion of voices, I have evoked the idea of a controlling body, an authority that would maintain a balance of values, maintain an epistemological system preventing it from collapse under its own weight. Yet the call to install “an authority” to regulate and filter this glut of information seems at the very best impracticable. Instead, the situation may require a completely different mode of relational thinking, a different way of accounting. (“To count” and “to tell” notably sharing the same etymological root.)

---

<sup>16</sup> We obviously find ourselves today in an information economy where ideas have a value that can be expressed in dollar or euro figures and that can be traded in the marketplace. This has not always been the case. Although the British Statute of Anne (1710) could be considered the earliest decree instating something like a copyright, the Berne Convention, which is the modern copyright law on which today’s international agreements are still based, was not established until 1886. See <http://www.copyrighthistory.com/anne.html>.

## Fortunes

Up until and beyond Copernicus's age, astrology, the telling of fortunes based on the position of the stars, and astronomy, the mathematical analysis of the position and movements of the heavenly bodies, were generally considered one and the same discipline. Scientific knowledge and belief had not yet parted ways (and some might question whether they ever truly did). Historically, astronomy and astrology share a close connection to myth, with its images of animals, gods, and quasi-ritual objects overlaying a chaos of stars illuminating the night sky. While astronomy today limits itself to an analysis and prediction of events pertaining to dead-and-dumb rock and ice hurtling through space, astrology—equally based on mathematics and geometry—claims knowledge as to the path and quality of relationships of living matter, in fact, beyond this: consciousness and spirit. Astronomy and astrology, each in their own way, do not only attempt to illuminate what already is, but promise a hold on the future, for example by way of calendars—yet astrology does so in patent speculation.

In this speculation, astrology shares a fundamental quality with the capitalist principle of “forward dynamism”—one of its defining characteristics. This similarity manifests not merely in the trading of the poetically named futures, but in the simple fact that *any* investment of capital will realize itself only in a future moment; each and every act in a capitalist economy is one of speculation—however minor, a speculation on a future outcome.<sup>17</sup> It is this notion of speculation that also registers a kinship between fiscal economies and economies of ideas—parallel universes for which circulation is axiomatic. And while speculation can be driven by a desirous impulse that projects an ideal (as a future outcome), brokers, like alchemists turning lead into gold, are also hedging bets on negative developments, turning losses into gains (for example, by “betting” on a stock's decline in order to realize a profit). Speculation in and of itself, once put into circulation, creates its own set of facts, resulting in an altered material reality. For a system to be operational, to gain a level of reality, it does not have to be true in any provable sense. Instead, as is well known, it has to function only as a communal fiction that is shared by a sufficient number of people.

## Revolution

I have spoken of circulation in connection to Copernicus's ideas; however, with regard to heavenly bodies, he refers distinctly to “revolution”—a repeated return along a constant path. This is significant in so far as in contemporary usage, “revolution,” oxymoronically, is more often intended to signify exactly the opposite: not a return to the known, but a break with the habitual.<sup>18</sup>

Yet during Copernicus's lifetime, this new conception of the term “revolution” as a drastic change—the speculation on, and by extension the instantiation of, another possible world—did not yet exist, and neither did the idea that the planets traveled along elliptical paths, as Johannes

---

<sup>17</sup> See Melanie Gilligan, “Affect & Exchange,” in *Intangible Economies*.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Benjamin advances that “Marx says that revolutions are the locomotives of world history. But the situation may be quite different. Perhaps revolutions are not the train ride, but the human race grabbing for the emergency brake.” Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). Thanks to Olaf Nicolai for mentioning this statement of Benjamin's.

Kepler proved in 1609.<sup>19</sup> Copernicus still imagined perfect geometric symmetry, composed of conclusive circles focused on a single center, whereas the ellipse is a form that orders itself around a duality of points, thereby implying relationality. Imagining and reimagining a universe, it is therefore pertinent not only to think of Kepler's ellipses as related to the syntactical ellipsis—the three dots that commonly indicate either a deliberate omission or an unfinished thought—but also to Aby Warburg's Hamburg reading room: an elliptical space that held the Warburg universe in its orbit.<sup>20</sup> This reading room was at the heart of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, which was founded in Hamburg in the 1920s.<sup>21</sup> Warburg became interested in Kepler, and Kepler's ellipses, during a time when he was institutionalized due to his persistent struggle with what was later diagnosed as schizophrenia and manic depression. Facing his own demons, Warburg was fascinated by the power of symbols, so prominently present in astrology, that formed one prong of a dual mechanism—besides rationality and science—intended to conquer the profoundly human phobia of chaos and the unknown. Likely by deeply felt personal necessity, Warburg positioned “In place of the circle [...] the geometric ellipsis, and in doing so, on the path to a ‘mathematical cosmophysics’ accomplished a significant step toward de-demonization and de-anthropomorphization of the heavens. The ellipsis is, especially because of its di-polar shape, the symbolic form of ‘forces that beget space for thought.’”<sup>22</sup>

Warburg's library proposed a new conception of an epistemological system that championed, through its unusual classification system, a circulation of ideas over the notion of physical books circulating among readers, as is the case in a common circulating library. In other words, his library favored an immaterial permeability among self-contained books—and thereby exceeded the notion of the book as property: a thing proper unto itself, in the sense of being particular to itself.

Astronomy and astrology, which I use throughout this essay to discuss aspects of circulation, also formed a fulcrum of Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas. The Atlas is founded on two key concerns of Warburg's research: orientation and expression. Warburg recognized symbolic systems—for example those found in astrological, but also religious cosmologies—as a civilizational move to “manage” affect, which in turn expressed itself in what he termed “pathos formulas,” embodiments of universal affective forces, effective across cultures and ages. Importantly, Warburg positions the spectrum of affect not only in the region of the desirous that I reference in the epigraph of this essay, but also in the domain of fear. While this focus on a phobic dynamic may well have been founded in Warburg's own personal history, it is obvious

---

<sup>19</sup> After having published *Astronomia nova* in 1609, a work that postulated planetary orbits to be elliptical, Kepler went on to publish *Epitome astronomiae Copernicanae* in seven volumes. Despite its name, it did not deal with Copernican ideas in great detail, but simply took Copernicus's heliocentrism as a point of departure to then elaborate Kepler's own theories on the ellipses. *Epitome* became Kepler's most significant book.

<sup>20</sup> I thank Lisa Robertson for bringing Aby Warburg to my attention while writing this essay and also for her pointing out Warburg's intense interest in Kepler.

<sup>21</sup> Under the threat of Nazism, it was relocated to London in 1933 and is now part of the University of London.

<sup>22</sup> Hartmut Böhme, “Aby M. Warburg (1866–1929),” in *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft: Von Friedrich Schleiermacher bis Mircea Eliade*, ed. Axel Michaels (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997); my translation. Böhme goes on to state that: “Not without reason did Warburg allude with the elliptical room to a time to which he, in the midst of, and reflecting on, World War I, dedicated his longest study ‘Pagan Antique Prophecy in Words and Images in the Age of Luther.’”

that the drive to “manage” information (in the broadest sense: sensory, image-based, textual) is not just to make it useful, but to sustain a self, something that the desirous force continually strives to exceed. This force field, this duality, between desire and fear finds its expression in the ellipsis, the “space for thought.”

Accordingly, the isolated, specific items Warburg unearthed and made available in the irregular architectural space of his library seem less significant than precisely the way in which Warburg struggled to relate a vast number of items that crossed and recrossed classification systems which had traditionally allowed them to be made sense of. These classification systems sprang from authoritative systems, academic traditions that constituted distinct filters on knowledge and information. Yet it seems that Warburg did not intend to dismantle any of them, instead he moved through and among them with impunity. Hartmut Böhme writes of Warburg as having embodied “a kind of pantheism that turned its eye on epistemology.”<sup>23</sup>

Copernicus authored a model not necessarily true in order for it to be real, but functional as a communal fiction, and he intended it, literally, to be *universal*. Four centuries later, Warburg embodied a very different mode of authorship that defined itself through the ongoing attempt to articulate a knowledge system constituted of a multiplicity of dynamic relationships, creating a space for thought to circulate. The particular quality of this space for thought is in itself polymorphic and dynamic. As Böhme writes, “it is important that the gap [the space] produced by mnemonic techniques [embodiments and symbolizations of affective drives] does not produce a duration that describes a linear arrow in time moving from ecstatic delirium to sensible prudence [...] but a ‘rhythm,’ a swing of the pendulum, a ‘circulation.’”<sup>24</sup>

This space, or gap—a void that finds its simile in outer space—is produced in a proto-economic exchange that, in its active state, suspends any notion of property—and also of propriety. It is a transgressive state forced into being by devastating affective momentum. Inasmuch as it is a struggle of forces, it is an unstable, antagonistic space that nevertheless produces an arena—the aforementioned stage—the ring (the circle), and force field in which the encounter takes place, and the story unfolds. This is a space that makes culture possible, no less.

First published in: *Undoing Property?* Marysia Lewandowska, Laurel Ptak (eds.). Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013.

---

<sup>23</sup> “Eine Art Pantheismus ins Epistemologische gewendet.” *Ibid.*, 9. Of course, this turn away from a “monotheist model” had been under way in the arts of the Western world for ages, and historically, art, in all its variants, as an offspring of religious practice has performed this multivalence in exchange and in signification parallel to fiscal/material economies—yet with an incredible acceleration since Warburg’s lifetime. Where up to the Middle Ages artists worked anonymously (when still designated as crafts people), ostensibly giving voice to a divine vision of the universe managed and sanctioned by the Church, they increasingly became authors, authorized by none other than themselves. This change occurred concurrently with the transition from feudal structures to a civic society and the emergence of a middle class that owned private property through which, in part, it was able to give expression to a newly-won sense of individuality.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.